

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An exhaust gas cleaning system for an internal combustion engine, the system comprising:

an exhaust gas after-treatment device disposed in an exhaust passage of the engine;

an outlet gas temperature sensing means for sensing outlet gas temperature of exhaust gas downstream of the exhaust gas after-treatment device;

temperature estimating means for calculating estimated temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device from an output of the outlet gas temperature sensing means with the use of an inverse transfer function of a change in the outlet gas temperature with respect to a change in the temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device; and

state detecting means for determining whether the exhaust gas after-treatment device is in a predetermined state, based on the estimated temperature calculated by the temperature estimating means.

2. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 1, wherein the temperature estimating means uses the inverse transfer function expressed with first-order lag and dead time.

3. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 2, wherein the temperature estimating means changes a time constant of the first-order lag and the dead time respectively in accordance with a flow rate of the exhaust gas.

4. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 3, wherein the temperature estimating means decreases the time constant of the first-order lag and the dead time respectively as the flow rate of the exhaust gas increases.

5. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 1, further comprising controlling means for controlling the exhaust gas after-treatment device within the predetermined state, based on a result of the determination performed by the state detecting means.

6. An exhaust gas cleaning system for an internal combustion engine, the system comprising:

an exhaust gas after-treatment device disposed in an exhaust passage of the engine;

an inlet gas temperature sensor for sensing inlet gas temperature of exhaust gas upstream of the exhaust gas after-treatment device;

an outlet gas temperature sensor for sensing outlet gas temperature of the exhaust gas downstream of the exhaust gas after-treatment device;

first temperature estimating means for calculating first estimated temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device from an output of the inlet gas temperature sensor with the use of a transfer function of a change in the temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device with respect to a change in the inlet gas temperature;

second temperature estimating means for calculating second estimated temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device from an output of the outlet gas temperature sensor with the use of an inverse transfer function of a change in the outlet gas temperature with respect to the change in the temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device; and

state detecting means for determining whether the exhaust gas after-treatment device is in a predetermined state, based on the first estimated temperature calculated by the first temperature estimating means and the second estimated temperature calculated by the second temperature estimating means.

7. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 6, wherein the first temperature estimating means uses the transfer function expressed with first-order lag and first dead time, and

the second temperature estimating means uses the inverse transfer function expressed with first-order lag and second dead time.

8. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 7, wherein the first temperature estimating means changes a first time constant of the first-order lag and the first dead time respectively in accordance with a flow rate of the exhaust gas, and

the second temperature estimating means changes a second time constant of the first-order lag and the second dead time respectively in accordance with the flow rate of the exhaust gas.

9. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 8, wherein the first temperature estimating means decreases the first time constant of the first-order lag and the first dead time respectively as the flow rate of the exhaust gas increases, and

the second temperature estimating means decreases the second time constant of the first-order lag and the second dead time respectively as the flow rate of the exhaust gas increases.

10. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 6, further comprising:

a catalyst supported on a surface of the exhaust gas after-treatment device, wherein

the first estimated temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device is free from effect of reaction heat generated by the catalyst, and

the second estimated temperature of the exhaust gas after-treatment device reflects the effect of the reaction heat generated by the catalyst.

11. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 10, wherein

the state detecting means includes degradation determining means for determining that the catalyst is degraded when a difference between the first estimated temperature and the second estimated temperature is smaller than a predetermined value.

12. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 11, wherein the state detecting means determines the predetermined value in accordance with an operating state of the engine.

13. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 11, wherein the state detecting means performs the determination of the degradation of the catalyst only when the outlet gas temperature sensed by the outlet gas temperature sensor is equal to or higher than activation temperature of the catalyst.

14. The exhaust gas cleaning system as in claim 1, wherein the exhaust gas after-treatment device is a member or a combination of two or more members selected from the group consisting of a particulate filter with a catalyst, a particulate filter, an oxidation catalyst, a nitrogen oxide removal catalyst and a three-way catalyst.